



Your Future Ahead:

Advising Program Tool Kit



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Advising Program Tool Kit

Mentoring/Advising Framework

“What is counseling? Counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.”

American Counseling Association, 2008

The Importance of Counseling

Secondary students (grades 6-12) experience a wide range of emotions as they strive to establish a unique identity through which they filter social and emotional issues. Psychologist Erik Erikson terms this phase, which spans from age 12-19, as Fidelity: Identity vs. Role Confusion. Beginning at age 12, children become concerned with how they appear to others. As they transition from childhood to adulthood, children also examine their values and compare them to those of others. Erikson also believes that a sense of competence motivates children’s behavior and actions. During this critical stage of development, students need guidance from caring adults. We must make it a priority to advise students in the various areas of their life by helping them weigh their decisions and carefully consider their options.

Focus on the Essentials

According to Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Human Needs*, a person needs to have a sense of safety and belonging in order to be successful and reach his full potential. If basic needs aren’t being met, academics, work, planning for the future, and self-actualization are at the bottom of the priority list. This is especially true if a student does not have a caring adult with whom to connect. Students in middle school and high school especially can “feel insignificant, unknown or even lost” (Schanfield, 2010) which can greatly affect the students’ ability to experience successes. Mentoring and advising programs can be very positive, very powerful ways to help address the needs of these students. When students enter the school building they must be met with a positive learning environment that has been intentionally designed by the administrators, teachers, staff, and school community. The student advising program can be the model program that helps to create this atmosphere. A good advising program can unite students, staff, parents, the community, businesses, and higher education to make the most of a student’s educational experience.

In addition to academic guidance, secondary students need opportunities to identify and explore personal and social goals for adulthood. As students transition from elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school, they will be faced with increasingly complex issues and



decisions. How they approach these issues and what decisions they make can have lasting impact on their academic, social, emotional and physical development. As schools have become extremely busy places, it is not only the responsibility of the guidance counselor to help guide students through these stages, but also the responsibility of each teacher and each caring adult with whom the child comes into contact.

Current research on advising /mentoring programs has shown that a well developed, comprehensive program can also serve to reduce dropout rates, raise graduation rates and help pave the way for students to seek post-secondary pursuits after high school (Schanfield, 2010; Hodges, 2010).

The Background of the Development of the Advising Toolkit

Our goal in Kentucky is to see that every child is [proficient and prepared for success](#). National research shows that education reform is moving towards smaller learning communities, more student-centered school experiences, more personalized programs with support services and increased intellectual rigor. The establishment of advising and mentoring programs in secondary schools is essential to Kentucky's mission of increasing student success. Research shows that if schools create safe, supportive, and respectful learning environments that personalize young people's learning experiences, we can help them achieve more academic success. "The primary goal of [advisory programs] is to provide students with early awareness of the benefits of continuing their education" beyond high school, whether that be a two year or four year college or university experience or career certification (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). By having a caring adult as a mentor/advisor, students feel more connected to their school, and as a result tend to have a better educational experience. This advising relationship can result in reduced retention rates, decreased truancy and behavioral issues, increased test scores and graduation rates, as well as improved interpersonal relationships and workforce readiness.

Purposes of an Advising/Mentoring Program

For an advising program to be successful, goals and outcomes need to be established. The advisory program can help students discover more about themselves, gain self-confidence, engage in their education and set goals for their future. A strong advising program should provide students the tools they need both academically and personally for success and encourage active participation in their school and community. It can also help them avoid obstacles that could prevent them from reaching their goals.

The U.S. Department of Education (2007) suggests that advising/mentoring programs should provide a range of services. A comprehensive program could include academic enrichment, information sharing, mentoring activities and social enrichment. Advising/mentoring programs need to begin at an early age with students, so programs should begin by middle school at the latest to have the most effect, especially with students of low socio-economic status and minority students (Malone, 2009 Fall).